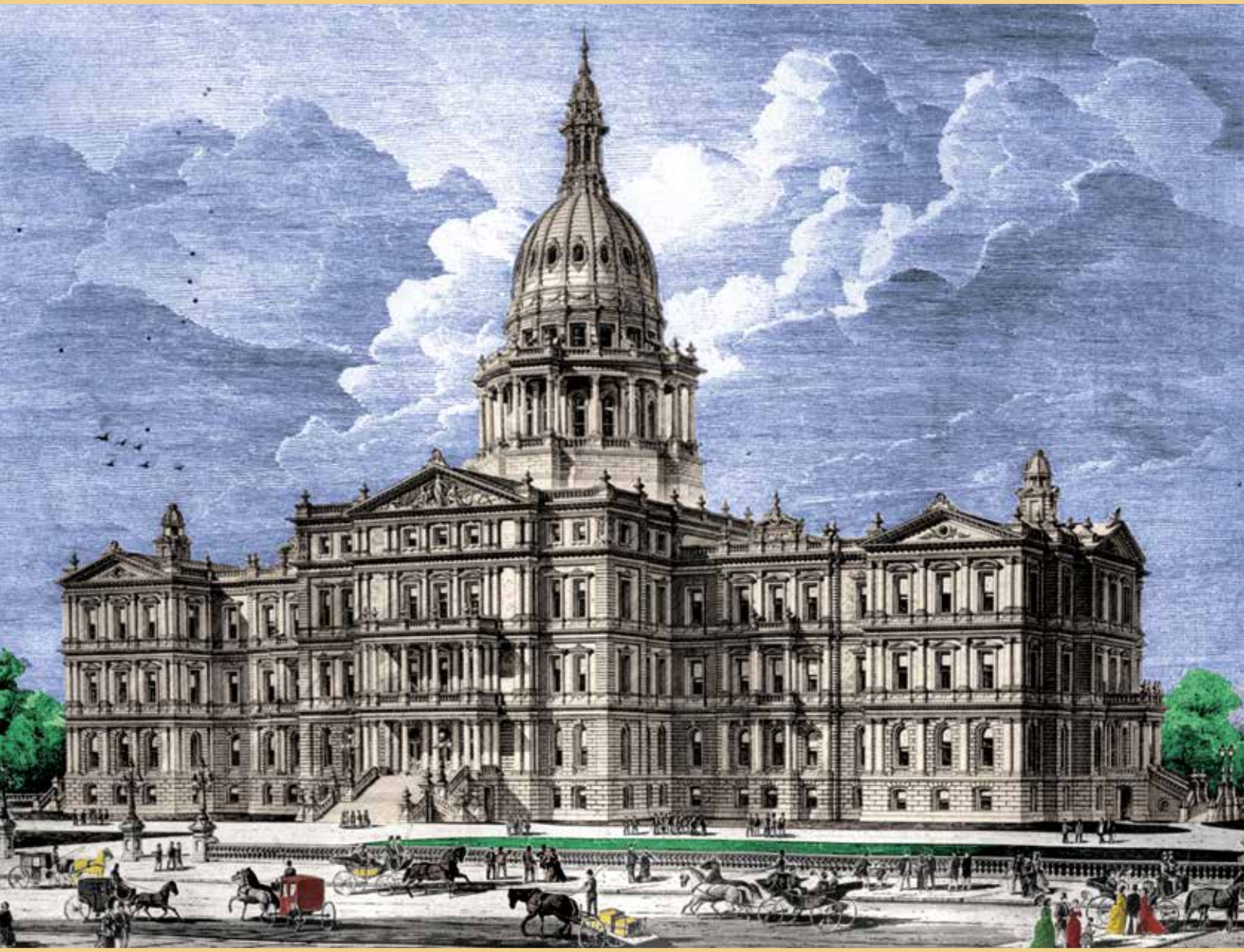
Michigan State Capitol



A Self-Guided Tour

Dear Friend:

Welcome to the Michigan State Capitol. We are delighted you have taken the time to visit us and tour this historic landmark.

Today Michigan's Capitol is nationally recognized for its extraordinary architecture and art. It stands as Michigan's most important historic building and a proud symbol of the state. Sadly, this was not always the case. For decades the building's history and beauty were threatened by years of weathering, neglect, crowding, hard use, and technological change.

In 1987, the Michigan Legislature established the Michigan Capitol Committee and charged it with overseeing a landmark restoration of the aging building. Begun in 1989 and completed in 1992, the restoration won national acclaim with top awards from the National Trust for Historic Preservation. In 1992, the National Park Service also named the Capitol a National Historic Landmark, an award reserved only for America's most important historic places. Although widely honored for its authentic restoration, the Capitol did not become a museum. Instead, it remains a dynamic, living building, fully prepared to honor its past while serving the people of Michigan as a modern and efficient seat of state government.

On January 1, 1879, a magnificent new Capitol was dedicated to the people of Michigan. Speaking at its dedication, Governor Croswell noted that the structure stood as "evidence of the lasting taste, spirit and enterprise" of the citizens of the state. In November 1992, more than 113 years later, another celebration took place, marking both the successful conclusion of the Capitol's restoration and its rededication to at least another 100 years of service to Michigan.

Michigan State Capitol

Opened January 1, 1879

Rededicated November 19, 1992

Prepared by the Michigan Legislature

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Before You Start Your Tour . . .

We hope you enjoy your visit to Michigan's magnificent state capitol. In 1992, the National Park Service designated the Capitol a **National Historic Landmark**, recognizing it as a national treasure and one of the most important historic buildings in the country. Why?

A Monument to the Arts:

As you tour, take note of the Capitol's breathtaking rotunda, magnificent corridors and chambers, rich walnut woodwork and elegant marble columns. But look carefully or you may be fooled! In the 1880s, inexpensive materials like pine, plaster, pressed tin and cast iron were painted to mimic real marble and walnut—costly materials the state could not afford. More than nine acres of walls, ceilings, woodwork and columns were painted by hand, using brilliant colors, elaborate patterns and every skill of the painter's art. Today, every inch carefully restored, the deception is so successful that few visitors realize that our marble columns are really painted cast iron and our walnut woodwork is really painted pine. The Michigan State Capitol stands today as one of the country's best examples of the painted decorative arts of the Victorian era.

A Monument to Its Architect:

Elijah E. Myers (1830?-1909) was virtually unknown until he won a national competition in 1871 to design Michigan's third statehouse. His design, chosen over 20 others, was judged the only one capable of being built within its advertised budget of 1.2 million dollars while, at the same time, producing a handsome, fireproof building grand enough to meet the needs of a young and growing state.

Myers quickly moved from Springfield, Illinois, to Detroit to oversee the construction of the new capitol. His design for the Michigan State Capitol met with great acclaim and launched his national career. Soon Myers ranked as one of America's most noted—and most prolific—architects. By the time he died in 1909, Myers had designed more state capitols than any other architect in American history. Today, the capitols of Michigan, Texas and Colorado still stand as lasting testaments to his skill.

A Monument to American History:

Myers was one of the first architects to take inspiration from the newly-remodeled (1851-1863) United States Capitol in Washington, DC. Myers recognized that the U.S. Capitol's new monumental cast iron dome had come to represent the Union that Michigan had recently sacrificed so much to save during the bloody years of the Civil War. Myers's design for Michigan, with its lofty central dome and balanced wings, mirrored the national capitol and met with instant national success. His design quickly became a model for most statehouses built in America during the "Golden Age" of capitol construction after the Civil War. His design for Michigan established the domed capitol as a national symbol—an icon of American democracy.

Preserving Michigan's Treasure

It is our goal to preserve this beautiful building for at least the next 100 years as the working seat of Michigan state government. Our staff is dedicated to the ideals of preservation maintenance. We believe that by respecting the building's history, art and architecture, and by using and maintaining it properly, we can prolong the Capitol's useful life indefinitely.

How You Can Help

Do Look—But Please Don't Touch the Paint!

Almost every surface you see, including the walls, the "marble" columns and the "walnut" woodwork, is hand-painted. Help us preserve this fragile art:

- Please do not lean items against the walls, columns or woodwork—or lean against them yourself.
- Please do not touch painted surfaces with your hands. Fingerprints are almost impossible to remove because we cannot wash them off without damaging the building's beautiful hand-painted surfaces.

Staying Safe

Every effort has been made to make your visit informative, enjoyable—and safe! You can help us by taking these simple precautions:

- Be careful on the cast iron Grand Stairs.
  Do not allow children to jump or run on them.
- Be careful at the railings in the rotunda galleries.
  Take small children by the hand.
  Make sure they do not climb or lean over—
  or through!—the railings. A good rule is to tell children to keep both heels on the floor while looking over.
- Do not place anything on the rotunda railings. Cameras and cell phones can slide off and injure those standing below. Place your camera strap around your wrist or neck before taking a photo over the railings.

Capitol Tour & Information Services
(517) 373-2353

If You Would Like to Learn More . . .

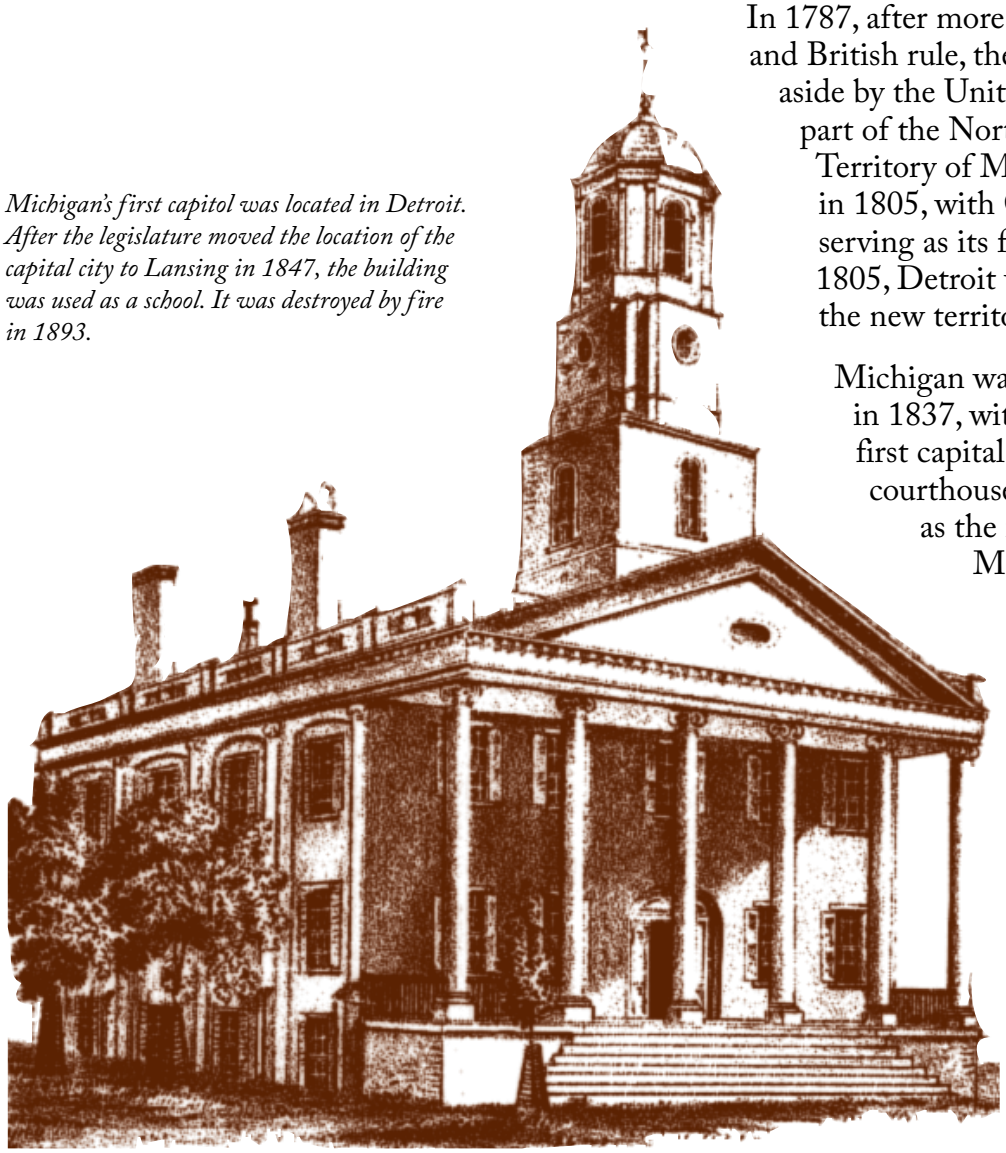
The Capitol Tour and Information Service (phone: (517) 373-2353) offers guided tours of the Capitol six days a week and serves as a ready reference for questions about the Capitol and state government. Tours last an hour and leave from the Information Desk at the building's front (east) ground floor entrance.

Tours are offered from 9 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Monday through Friday and 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturday (guided tours only on Saturday) with tours every 1/2 hour. The Capitol is closed Sundays and state holidays.

First, Some History. . .

Michigan's Three Capitols

The First Capitol: Lansing was not Michigan's original capital city. French fur traders and missionaries traveled the upper Great Lakes as early as the 1660s. In 1668, the Jesuit mission at Sault Ste. Marie became the first permanent European settlement in what is now Michigan. When Detroit was founded in 1701, it quickly became the most important settlement in the western Great Lakes region.



Michigan's first capitol was located in Detroit. After the legislature moved the location of the capital city to Lansing in 1847, the building was used as a school. It was destroyed by fire in 1893.

In 1787, after more than a century of French and British rule, the Michigan region was set aside by the United States government as part of the Northwest Territory. The Territory of Michigan itself was created in 1805, with General William Hull serving as its first governor. On July 1, 1805, Detroit was named the capital of the new territory.

Michigan was admitted to the Union in 1837, with Detroit selected as its first capital city. A territorial courthouse was pressed into service as the first capitol building. Michigan's first constitution, however, carried a provision: Detroit would remain the capital only until 1847, "when it shall be permanently located by the Legislature." This unleashed a firestorm of debate as each legislator vied for the honor of locating the capital in his district.

The Second Capitol: With many cities promoted and opposed, James Seymour, a speculator who owned land in Ingham County, drew attention to Lansing Township. On March 16, 1847, after months of debate, the governor signed a law naming Lansing Township in Ingham County as the new state capital. Horrified observers, noting that not even a village existed at the location, called it a "howling wilderness."

Western B. N. & Engraving Co. Chicago

Michigan's second capitol was built in Lansing in the winter of 1847-1848. After it was replaced by our third capitol in late 1878, the "Old Barn," as it was called, was sold and used for offices and manufacturing. It was destroyed by fire on December 16, 1882.

There was no time to waste. The legislature had to convene in its new "wilderness" capital by January 1848. So, in late 1847, a wooden structure was hastily thrown up to serve as a temporary capitol building. Soon a small settlement began to grow up around it. At first called "Michigan, Michigan," this confusing name was changed a few months later to "Lansing." Although it has served as Michigan's capital since 1847, Lansing was not incorporated as a city until 1859.

Michigan's second, "temporary" capitol was inadequate from the start, but any thought of a grander building had to wait until the end of the Civil War (1861-1865). Although a 16-foot addition was added in 1865, it was not until 1871 that Governor Henry Baldwin called for a larger, fireproof, and more dignified seat of state government. The legislature agreed.

The Third Capitol: A board of building commissioners was quickly named and a nationwide contest announced to select an architect to design the new capitol, with only $1,200,000 allowed for its construction. In January 1872, the winner was announced. A plan named "Tuebor" (meaning, "I will defend") had been chosen. It was submitted by architect Elijah E. Myers of Springfield, Illinois.

Photo: State Archives of Michigan

Construction began in 1872. When the cornerstone was laid on October 2, 1873, the ceremony rivaled anything Lansing had ever seen. Residents opened their homes as people from all over the state thronged the city.

Although the millions of bricks used for walls and ceilings were made in Lansing, building materials for the new capitol came from all over the country and even from abroad. Exterior stone came from Ohio, cast iron for the dome and floor beams from Pennsylvania, marble and limestone for the floors from Vermont, and tin for the roof from Wales. No preference was given to Michigan materials. Rather, the best materials were selected for the best price, no matter where they came from. The final cost of $1,427,738.78 was considered quite modest for the construction of a state capitol at the time.

The Capitol under construction in 1875. Derricks rise above the walls, which have been completed to the second story.

The building's style, incorporating motifs from classical Greek and Roman architecture, is often termed Renaissance Revival or Neoclassical. Columns in the classical orders—Doric, Ionic and Corinthian—grace the exterior and interior. A four-story entrance pavilion is flanked by balanced wings housing the legislative chambers, and high above it all floats a distinctive, graceful cast iron dome.

Photo: State Archives of Michigan

Architect Elijah Myers won national attention for the scandal-free construction and elegant, restrained design of Michigan's beautiful new capitol. Local citizens were so proud of the building that they called it the "Lion of Lansing."

Michigan's third capitol was dedicated on January 1, 1879. Sadly, the effects of crowding, remodeling, and neglect began to diminish the building almost at once. In 1989, a highly successful, award-winning restoration began. Completed in 1992, it reversed years of aging and unfortunate alterations, rediscovering the building's long-hidden beauty while equipping it to continue to serve as Michigan's Capitol well into the future.

Today the Capitol once again serves Michigan not only as the seat of state government but as a source of inspiration and a proud symbol of the state. At the same time, it serves as Michigan's most widely-recognized public forum, the scene of protests and rallies, speeches and special events. This vibrant, much-loved building is now equipped to lead Michigan into the 21st century and beyond.

Inside the Capitol

Enter the building to go back in time—back to the Victorian era of fine craftsmanship, elegance and grand opulence. Magnificent chandeliers softly light halls as they did when the Capitol was lit by gas; walls and ceilings glow with authentically-restored painted colors and patterns; and furnishings recreate the aura of another age.

THE GROUND FLOOR

RESTROOMS: Public restrooms are located on the ground, third and fourth floors. All restrooms are accessible to visitors with disabilities.

Plain and unadorned, the ground floor provides little hint of the splendors above. Never intended for public use, architect **Elijah Myers** originally located storerooms and an armory here. During the Capitol's restoration (1989-1992), the building's main entrance was relocated to the ground floor in order to improve security, public safety and accessibility. An **Information Desk** is also located here, where you can inquire about tours, Capitol history and the locations of legislators and other state government offices.

During the restoration, every effort was made to accurately return the Capitol to its original appearance. The ground floor was no exception, and even here great attention was paid to detail. An original gas cock, for example, found during the restoration, was copied and used in the reproduction lighting fixtures you see above you.

Once again the walls on the ground floor are plastered and painted to resemble the exterior stonework. To enhance the illusion, fake mortar joints are fashioned in plaster and paint. Here, as in most of the Capitol, pine wainscot covers the lower portion of the walls. It has been carefully painted to look like walnut.

When necessary to enhance utility and safety, some changes were made. Durable gray tile was substituted for original strip pine flooring. Lighting fixtures are electric rather than gas. And conspicuously absent are hundreds of spittoons once found throughout the Capitol.

Move to the center of the building where the corridors intersect. Now you are directly under the dome. Look up: the glass ceiling is actually the floor of the rotunda above. Here are the cast iron columns which support the floor and the massive walls which support the dome. Throughout the Capitol the walls, ceilings and floors are built of solid brick. This made the building enormously strong and—of great importance in a country where most buildings were built of wood—relatively fireproof.

Photo: Balthazor Korab

In the center of the Capitol, cast iron columns support the glass floor of the rotunda.

THE FIRST FLOOR

The Grand Stairs are located in the north or south corridors, or you can take the elevators to the upper floors. One elevator is located in the east (front) corridor and one in the north corridor near the rotunda.

At one time the Capitol housed all branches of state government, including the supreme court, legislature, governor and various state administrators, such as the attorney general and secretary of state. Here on the first floor are offices where some of these agencies were located. Today, all but the governor, lieutenant governor and the legislature have moved to other state office buildings. Legislative leadership now occupies these offices, including the Speaker of the House in the north wing and the Senate Majority Leader in the south wing.

Photo: Chris Powers

The Grand Staircases lead from the ground to the fourth floors on both the north and south sides of the rotunda. Made of cast iron manufactured in Pennsylvania, they are decorated underneath with beautiful painted designs.

Start your tour in the center of the rotunda directly beneath the dome.

The floor of the rotunda consists of 976 pieces of glass, each about five-eighths of an inch thick. The floor is 44½ feet in diameter. Its design creates an optical illusion: seen from above it appears that the center of the floor sinks to form a bowl. Lit from below, the Capitol's famous glass floor is one of the most beautiful and memorable sights in the building.

Photo: Thomas Gennara

One of the most spectacular views of the Capitol is this view of the inner dome from the first floor.

Above you, the rotunda rises 160 feet to an opening at the top of the inner dome. Called the **oculus**, or "eye" of the dome, it provides a glimpse into the vastness of the universe, represented by a starry sky. Just below the oculus are eight monumental paintings of female figures. Painted on canvas and glued directly to the inner dome, they are **muses**—guides and sources of inspiration—drawn from Greek and Roman mythology. Find the muse representing "art" (she is the one holding a paint palette in one hand). Starting with **art** and proceeding to your right, the muses are **agriculture, law, science, justice, industry, commerce and education**. Each muse offers the people of Michigan the means to achieve progress and future prosperity. They are the work of an Italian artist, **Tommaso Juglaris**, who painted them in 1886 while painting and teaching in Boston. Juglaris's name was forgotten for over 100 years until rediscovered in 1992 as a result of the Capitol's restoration.

The rotunda was designed with one purpose in mind: to awe and inspire. As you gaze into the starry sky high above, you feel that all the endless possibilities it represents is just within your grasp. The muses are there, offering their assistance and guidance, while encouraging us all to "reach for our stars."

The rotunda and inner dome are beautifully decorated with elaborately hand-painted designs, as are the walls and ceilings throughout the building. During the Capitol's restoration, over **nine acres of hand-painted surfaces** were carefully restored to look exactly as they did originally.

Notice the cases circling the rotunda. Until 1990 they contained over 160 treasured historic **battle flags** carried by Michigan regiments during the Civil War (1861-1865). Michigan contributed more than 90,000 volunteers to the struggle to save the Union and abolish slavery, a number which represents more than half of the military-age males in the state at the time. Among the banners in these cases was one carried by the First Michigan Sharpshooters. It was the first Union flag raised over Petersburg, the South's last stronghold, signaling that—after four long and agonizing years—the war was almost over. Because of their deteriorated condition, the flags were moved in 1990 to the Michigan Historical Museum, where they are being preserved. These cases now contain replicas.

Photo: Chris Powers

The entrance corridor on the first floor conveys the original elegance and craftsmanship of the Capitol. Restoration of the main corridors throughout the building involved stabilizing plaster; restoring decorative paint, including wood grained and marbled wainscot and wood-grained doors, door-frames and windows; restoring and improving lighting; restoring original marble and limestone tile floors; and installing an improved signage system.

For more information about the Michigan Capitol Battle Flag Collection, or if you would like to make a contribution please call 517-373-5157 or find us online at Michigan Battle Flags.

Photo: Chris Powers

Twenty chandeliers like this one, designed and crafted expressly for the Capitol, light the hallways. Today they are lit by lightbulbs—not gas.

Move into the east (front) corridor.

On the north wall opposite the elevator is a large "long drop" clock. It has hung in its present location since at least 1886. Called a "master" clock, it once drove a number of other clocks located throughout the Capitol. Well over 100 years old, it still keeps excellent time.

The magnificent cast metal **chandelier** above you is one of 20 designed just for the building. Called the "Michigan" chandeliers, they feature an elk and shield design inspired by the state's coat of arms. They were originally lit by gas. It was long believed that they were made of Michigan copper, but it was recently discovered that they were actually cast from a mixture of several other metals.

Note the entrance hall's "**marble**" columns, pilasters (the flat columns attached to the walls) and wainscot. None of it is actually marble. Hand painted to fool the eye, the columns are cast iron, the pilasters are plaster and the wainscot is pine. In an economy demanded by a limited budget, all the opulence of the Victorian age was achieved using humble materials transformed by skilled artisanry and craftsmanship. Today the Capitol is nationally recognized as a masterpiece of the painted decorative arts of the Gilded Age.

One of the building's most distinctive features is the checkerboard **black and white tiled floors** in the main corridors. The white tiles are a relatively inexpensive marble quarried in Vermont. The black tiles are limestone, also quarried in Vermont. Look carefully at the black tiles: they are filled with fossils of marine snails and other marine animals which lived during the Middle Ordovician about 475 million years ago. The large white spirals in the black tiles are the fossils of Maclurites, a large snail-like mollusk.

Photo: Fred Golden

This is the Gallery of the Governors, where portraits of former Michigan governors line the rotunda on the second and third floors. If you desire more information about the art in the Capitol The Michigan State Capitol Art Guide is available at the ground floor information desk.

THE SECOND FLOOR

Continue to the second floor.

Here you can view the **Gallery of Governors**, where portraits of former Michigan governors line the rotunda here and on the third floor. By tradition, governors pay for their own portraits, which are presented to the state after the governor leaves office. The portraits are arranged in chronological order, with the newest portraits on this floor and the older ones on the third floor. There is only room in the Gallery for 14 portraits, so, when a new one is added, the oldest is moved to another location in the building.

One of the Capitol's most unusual portraits is found here on the second floor of the Gallery of the Governors. It is the portrait of **Governor John Swainson**, who served from 1961 to 1962. Most visitors ask whether the painting is damaged. In fact, the painting was deliberately painted to look as it does. Swainson was 35 when he became Michigan's second youngest elected governor. Only 37 Governors served two-year terms under the pre-1963 Constitution when he left office; the painting's unfinished appearance was intended to symbolize Swainson's then-unfinished career.

Move around the rotunda to the east (front) corridor.

The **Governor's Office and Parlor** are located here. Among the best-documented and most beautiful rooms in the Capitol, they have been carefully restored. Features include original furnishings—a tribute to Michigan's furniture manufacturing heritage—made in 1876 by the Feige Brothers Company of Saginaw. Black-and-white pictures of Michigan governors line the Parlor walls, exact reproductions of the charcoal-enhanced photographs which once hung here. Among them is a picture of **Governor Charles Croswell**, the first governor to serve in the new Capitol and the first to use these rooms. Today, governors use these rooms primarily for special occasions, including bill-signing ceremonies, meetings with constituents and press conferences.

Note the **doorknobs** on the corridor doors. Doorknobs and hinges throughout the Capitol are cast with Michigan's coat of arms.

You may have already noticed the Capitol's beautiful "walnut" woodwork, including doors, doorframes, window frames and wainscot. Almost all of the building's wood trim appears to be walnut—but almost none of it is. Originally undertaken to save money, most of the Capitol's woodwork is inexpensive Michigan pine carefully hand painted (not stained!) to mimic costly walnut. Called "**wood graining**," this technique involves applying seven layers of paint, all by hand. Every line of grain is carefully hand painted—even the pores in the wood. Completely restored, today the Capitol ranks as one of the finest examples of this ancient art in the nation.

Photo: Fred Golden

The Parlor and Inner Office of the Governor.

The **lobbies of the House and Senate Chambers** are located on this floor in the north and south wings. Note the illustrated seating charts, designed to help you locate your legislator's desk in the chamber. On session days, the lobbies are thronged with people who have come to watch session or speak to their legislators.

Doorknobs and hinges throughout the Capitol are cast with Michigan's coat of arms.

Continue upstairs to the public viewing galleries for the House and Senate Chambers.

THE THIRD FLOOR

Public Restrooms: On this floor a men's restroom is found at the entrance to the House Chamber gallery, while a women's restroom is located at the entrance to the Senate Chamber gallery. Both restrooms are accessible to visitors with disabilities.

The public **viewing galleries** for the House of Representatives and Senate Chambers are located on this floor. You are always welcome here, although visitors must be seated when the chambers are in session. In addition, visitors may not use flash photography or cell phones or bring in food or drink during session. On very busy days you may have to wait briefly until a seat is vacated so that you can enter the galleries. Both galleries have areas for visitors using wheelchairs.

Proceed to the House Chamber gallery in the north wing.

The **House of Representatives Chamber**, with 110 members, is the larger of the two chambers. Each representative is elected to a two-year term from a district of about 90,000 constituents. Each member sits at an assigned desk, with Democrats traditionally sitting on the left of the chamber as you face the rostrum and Republicans on the right. The presiding officer is the **Speaker of the House**, a representative elected to this position by fellow members.

Restoration of this chamber was completed in April 1990. Original 1878 desks were refinished, the curving rostrum at the head of the chamber reconstructed and historic lighting restored or reduplicated from photographs. The chamber carpet was based on an authentic period design.

Voting was originally done by calling the roll and recording the "ayes" and "nays" by hand. Today, roll calls and voting are done electronically. Look for voting and message boards on either side of the Speaker's rostrum at the head of the chamber: they

Photo: Tim Burke, Michigan Department of Transportation

The Senate, with 38 members, occupies the smaller of the two chambers.

Photo: Tim Burke, Michigan Department of Transportation

The House of Representatives Chamber, with 110 members, is the larger of the two chambers.

are carefully designed to blend almost invisibly with the wall when not in use. In this way, we preserved the historic appearance of the chamber without sacrificing modern efficiency. Members vote by pressing one of several colored buttons located on the small console between each pair of members' desks. The green button is used to record a "yes" vote, while the red button is used to record a "no" vote. In order for visitors to see how their representatives have voted, each legislator's name lights up in either green or red on the voting boards. Other colors are used for other functions, such as indicating that the representative is abstaining or wishes to record an explanation for a "no" vote.

On the wall over the Speaker's Chair is a magnificent version of Michigan's coat of arms, rendered in cast plaster, glaze, paint and gold leaf. On the left is an elk and on the right a moose, flanking America's national symbol, the eagle. Above the eagle are the Latin words of our national motto, "E pluribus unum," meaning, "From many, one." A shield bears the Latin word, "Tuebor," meaning, "I will defend." Below is a figure standing on a peninsula backed by the rays of the rising sun. Banners at the bottom bear the Latin words of Michigan's motto, "Si quaeris peninsulam amoenam circumspice," meaning, "If you seek a pleasant peninsula, look about you." At the time the motto was written, the Upper Peninsula was not part of Michigan.

Photo: Patti Romain-Denney

Photo: Patti Romain-Denney

The coffered ceilings in both the House and Senate Chambers have been restored. Original panes of ruby-and-white hand-etched glass were lost years ago, replaced in the House by plastic and in the Senate by plywood. Replicas now feature the coats of arms of all 50 states, as well as Victorian designs and Michigan themes. A detail (right) shows Michigan's coat of arms. Skylights in the roof above let natural light into the chambers through these panels of glass.

Photo: Michigan Capitol Committee

The old Supreme Court Chamber, now used as a meeting room for the Senate Appropriations Committee, retains much of its original character. Elijah Myers, the building's architect, paid particular attention to the details of this room and designed not only the walnut judges' bench but also the large bookcase behind it. The elaborately painted ceiling is original and required the attention of a fine arts conservator to save it. Plaster was stabilized, flaking paint reattached and the whole ceiling carefully cleaned. The carpeting was copied from photos of the original. Today the room is one of the grandest in the Capitol.

The Great Seal of the State of Michigan, from which the coat of arms is taken, was designed in 1835 by General Lewis Cass, former governor of Michigan Territory. A portrait of Cass hangs on the east wall: it is the one nearest you on your right as you face the rostrum. "Tuebor" was Cass's reminder to Michigan that it is our duty, as a border state, to protect the country as a first line of defense in case of foreign invasion.

Opposite Cass, on the west wall, is a portrait of Stevens T. Mason. Nicknamed the "Boy Governor," he was Michigan's first governor and, at age 24, the youngest person in America's history to hold this office. The portrait was painted from life by Detroit artist Alvin Smith and remains to this day one of the best images of the young governor, who died at age 31.

Continue to the rotunda railings.

Please remember: Do NOT allow children to climb on the railings or stick their heads through them. Do NOT place items on the railings. And do NOT hold cameras over the railings unless firmly secured with a strap.

Here you can once again view the Gallery of Governors, the eight allegorical muses and the oculus. Looking down, you can also see the optical illusion created by the glass floor, which looks like a bowl or reverse dome to many people.

Proceed around the rotunda to the south wing.

Here you can enter the gallery to view the **Senate Chamber**. The Senate, with 38 members, occupies the smaller of the two chambers. Each senator is elected to a four-year term from a district of about 260,000 constituents. The presiding officer, called the **President of the Senate**, is the lieutenant governor of the state.

Although architecturally almost identical, each chamber has its own color scheme. The House Chamber features terra cottas and teals; the Senate Chamber, vibrant blues and silver. Both feature elaborately painted designs, gold leaf and colored glazes. Skylights in both chambers once again allow natural light to stream through ruby-and-white etched glass panels in the coffered ceilings. More light is provided by four original chandeliers (six in the House) which glitter overhead. Made of brass, lead crystal and fire-hardened glass, they can be carefully lowered to the floor for cleaning.

The seating arrangement on the chamber floor is essentially the same as in the House Chamber. In both chambers the solid walnut **members' desks** were designed by the Capitol's architect, Elijah Myers—and originally cost the enormous sum of $13.65 each! Here, consoles at the side of each desk house computers and telephones. And, as elsewhere in the Capitol, the goals of the restoration were to achieve both historic accuracy and modern efficiency. When the restoration of this chamber was completed in January 1990, it was the first in the nation to be fully computerized.

Two portraits flank the rostrum. On your right is **Austin Blair**, Michigan's "war governor," who led the state from 1861 to 1864 during the terrible years of the Civil War. A statue of Governor Blair stands directly in front of the Capitol: he is the only person in Michigan history to be honored with a statue on Capitol Square. On your left is a portrait of the **Marquis de Lafayette**, the young French nobleman who helped America win its independence. Lafayette was greatly admired by Michigan's early leaders and this portrait was acquired when Michigan became a state in 1837. It has hung in all three Michigan state capitols. Almost impossible to see unless in use, voting and message boards similar to those in the House are found to the right and left of these portraits. Over the President of the Senate's Chair is the coat of arms of the United States, a federal eagle rendered in gilded plaster and paint.

Leaving the Senate gallery, proceed to the east (front) corridor.

The old **Supreme Court Chamber** is located here. The Supreme Court left the Capitol in 1970 and the room is now used by the Senate Appropriations Committee for meetings and hearings. The room, with its exceptionally high ceiling, elaborate decorative paint, and ornamental plasterwork, is one of the most elegant in the Capitol. It shows how a space can be adapted to a new use without sacrificing beauty or history.

Since the originals were discarded long ago, the chandeliers and carpeting were replicated from historic photographs. Walls in this handsome room feature poinsettia flowers done in raised plaster, paint and glaze. Portraits of two former chief justices who once presided over this room hang on the walls. Of special note is that of **James Valentine Campbell** (hanging nearest the corner). Campbell helped create the modern-day Michigan Supreme Court and is considered one of the giants in state Supreme Court history. He served as chief justice from 1878 to 1879, the first to preside in the newly completed Capitol.

AT THE END OF YOUR TOUR. . .

We hope you enjoyed your tour. To return to your starting point on the ground floor, take the Grand Stairs in the north or south wings or the elevator in the east corridor (near the old Supreme Court Chamber).

If you have questions or comments or need assistance, please return to the Information Desk on the ground floor near the front entrance. We will be happy to help you.

Outside the Capitol. . .

Capitol Square

If you have time, spend a few minutes more and tour the Capitol's grounds. The grounds were carefully designed to enhance the building rather than compete with it. The original scheme called for rows of trees around the perimeter of the square, creating a leafy frame for the Capitol. The interior grounds were kept open, so that visitors could enjoy an unobstructed view of the building itself. This scheme was gradually lost over the years as trees were planted everywhere, more or less at random. The original scheme is slowly being reestablished, however. As misplaced trees die, they are simply not replaced.

Capitol Square boasts many species of trees, an expansive lawn, statues and monuments evoking Michigan's past, and—during the summer—beautiful flower beds. These beds were designed by experts from the Landscape Architecture Program at Michigan State University and are based on the Square's original planting scheme.

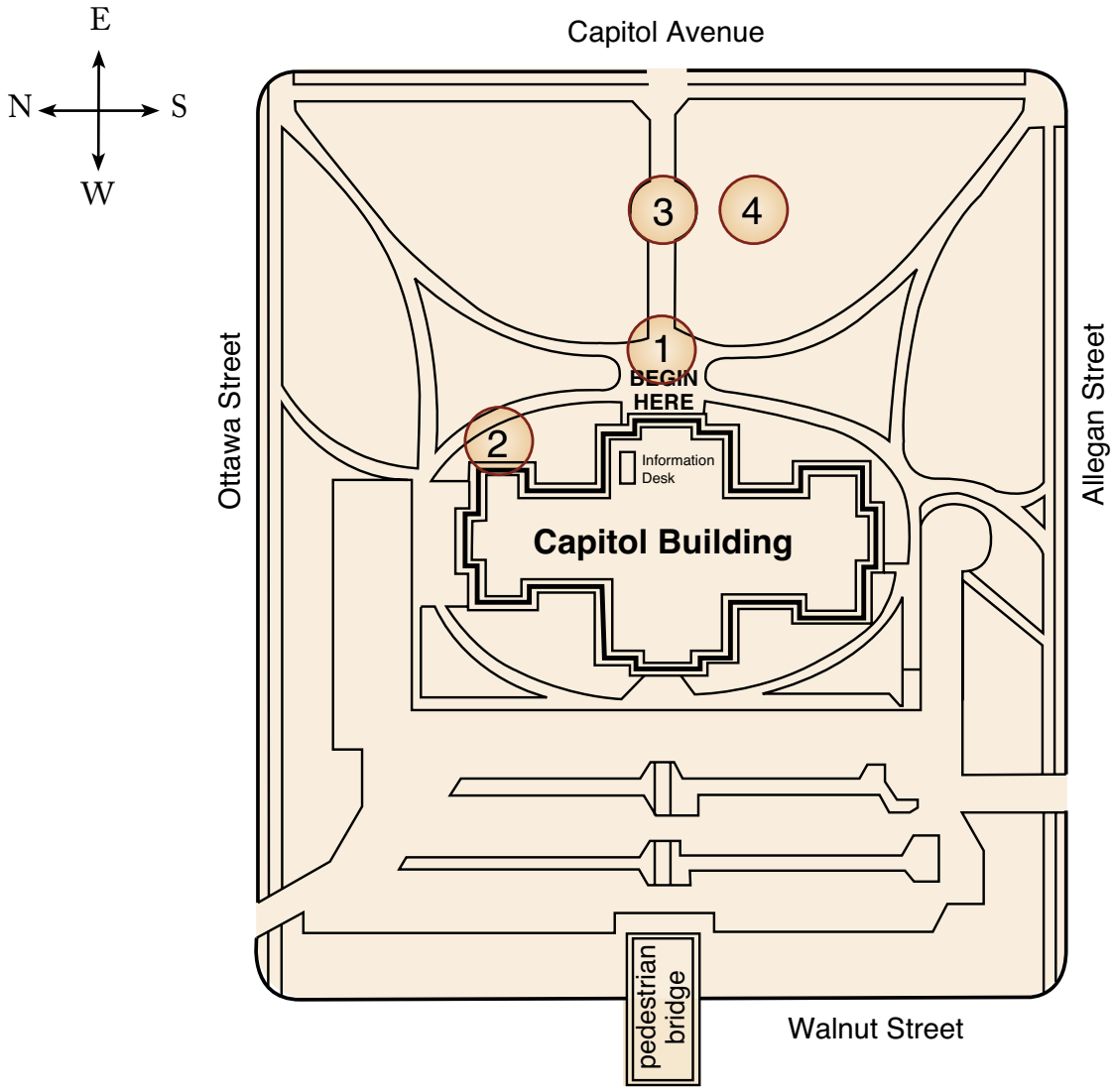
The two long beds curving in front of the Capitol feature perennial flowers and plants. Authentically designed in the style of the Victorian period, they reflect the influence of English garden designer **Gertrude Jekyll**, whose writings inspired many American gardeners. The beds provide masses of color throughout the blooming period. Each bed is a mirror of the other, with flowers ranging through the color spectrum from hot to cool. Hot colors (yellows, oranges, reds) are found at the head of the beds near the Capitol's entrance. As the beds curve away, they range into cool colors (blues, purples, whites) at the outer ends.

The beds flanking the entrance sidewalk and surrounding the statue of Austin Blair are also based on a popular historic planting scheme called "**carpet bedding**," in which annual flowers are planted in elaborate, often geometric, designs. This became very fashionable around grand public buildings and large private estates during the Victorian period.

Capitol Square's spectacular flower beds are beautiful and historically authentic. They differ from Victorian schemes in one respect, however. Rather than using exotic, expensive plant material, our beds are designed with public use in mind and are as hardy and maintenance-free as possible.

A statue of Governor Blair stands directly in front of the Capitol: he is the only person in Michigan history to be honored with a statue on Capitol Square.

Portrait of Austin Blair, Michigan's "war governor," who led the state from 1861 to 1864 during the terrible years of the Civil War.



(1) Face the Capitol and look up toward the dome to see a sculpture group on the **pediment** (the triangular area) above the Capitol's entrance porch. The sculpture is carved of the same Ohio sandstone as the rest of the building's stonework. Because it is raised from the stone it is carved from, it is called a "**relief sculpture**."

The central figure, dressed as a Native American, represents Michigan. She offers the people of Michigan a book and a globe, symbols of progress and the future. She has discarded symbols of Michigan's wilderness past, as represented by the cast-off weapons at her feet. The seated figure on the right, surrounded by a plow, horn of plenty, sheaf of wheat and laurel wreath, represents agriculture. The figure on the left, seated on a bale and supported by an anchor and the skeleton of a partly built ship, represents shipping and commerce. In the corners of the pediment are lumbering and mining tools. The sculpture reflects Michigan's pride in its economic advances and faith in progress and the future.

(2) At the northeast corner of the Capitol is a large granite **cornerstone**. It is marked with two dates: "1872" marks the start of the construction of the Capitol and "1878" marks its completion. The cornerstone was laid during a gala ceremony on October 2, 1873.

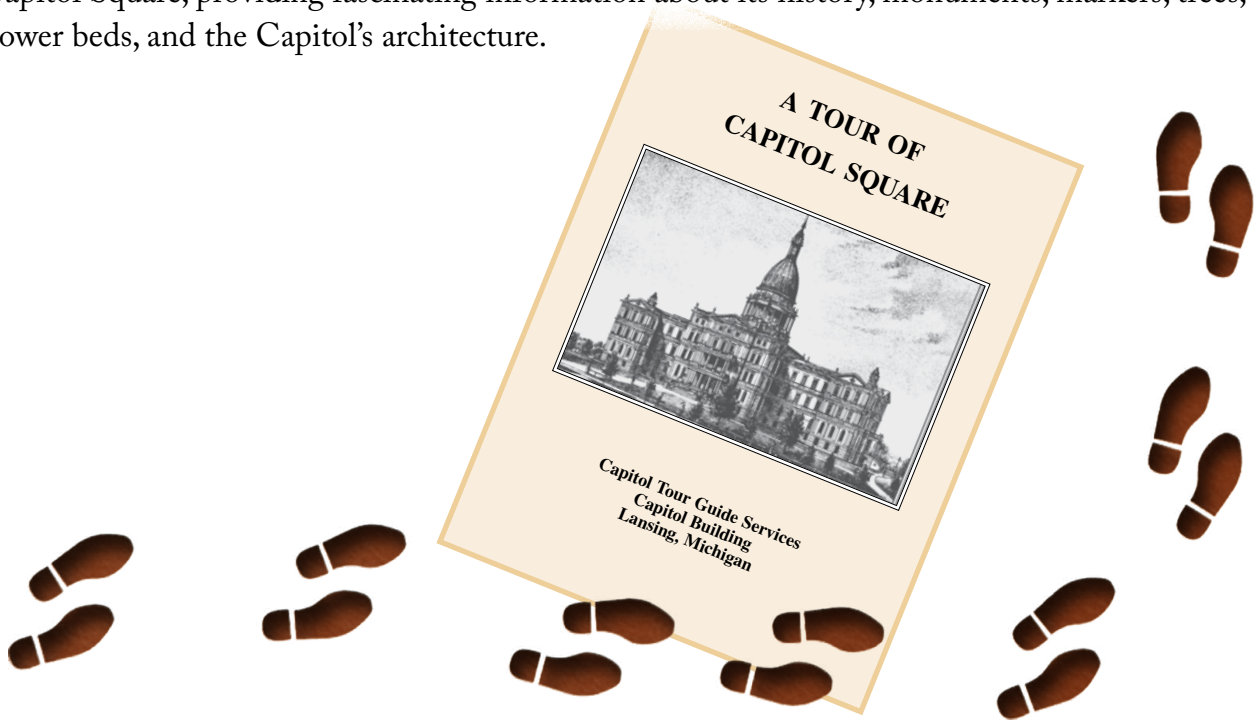
(3) Standing directly in front of the Capitol is a **statue of Austin Blair**, Michigan's beloved "Civil War Governor." Unveiled in 1898, it is the only statue on Capitol Square which honors a specific person. Governor Blair, who served from 1861 to 1864, was in large part responsible for inspiring and organizing Michigan's war effort. More than 90,000 Michigan troops, most of them volunteers, fought to abolish slavery and preserve the Union. Blair remained a great popular hero until his death in 1894.

(4) A huge eastern **catalpa tree**, located just south of the Austin Blair Statue, is one of the biggest of its kind in the nation. Certified by the American Forestry Association's National Register of Big Trees, in 1992 it measured 107 feet tall, 85 feet across the crown, and more than 20 feet around the trunk.

Everything about a catalpa is big. Huge white clusters of flowers appear in the spring. Heart-shaped leaves measuring up to a foot long and eight inches across unfurl in the summer. Ten-inch seed pods, sometimes called "cigars" because of their distinctive shape, form in the autumn. This tree is truly "living" history—it was growing on Capitol Square when the building was dedicated in 1879.

If You Would Like to Learn More . . .

Ask for our free guide, "A Tour of Capitol Square," available at the Information Desk just inside the front entrance to the Capitol on the ground floor. This booklet takes you on a self-guided tour of Capitol Square, providing fascinating information about its history, monuments, markers, trees, flower beds, and the Capitol's architecture.



Michigan State Capitol

Opened
January 1, 1879

Rededicated
November 19, 1992

CAPITOL STATISTICS

Height — 267 feet from the ground to the tip of the finial above the dome.

Length — 420 feet, 2 inches.

Width — 273 feet, 11 inches.

Perimeter — 1,520 feet.

Area — 1¼ acres.

Construction Period — Six years (from the summer of 1872 until September 26, 1878). The building was dedicated on January 1, 1879.

Restoration Period — Three years, from 1989 through 1992. The building was rededicated on November 19, 1992.

FACTS ABOUT MICHIGAN

State Name:	"Michigan" is derived from the Native American word "Michigama," meaning "large lake."
State Nickname:	The "Wolverine State."
Capitol:	Lansing, since 1847.
Admission to the Union:	Michigan became the 26th state in 1837.
State Motto:	Si Quaeris Peninsulam Amoenam Circumspice. (If you seek a pleasant peninsula, look about you.)
State Flower:	The apple blossom, adopted in 1897.
State Seal:	Adopted in 1911.
State Bird:	The robin, adopted in 1931.
State Tree:	The white pine, adopted in 1955.
State Stone:	The Petoskey stone, adopted in 1965.
State Gem:	Chlorastrolite (known as "greenstone"), adopted in 1972.
State Fish:	The brook trout, adopted in 1988.
State Soil:	The Kalkaska Soil Series, adopted in 1990.
State Reptile:	The painted turtle, adopted in 1995.
State Game Mammal:	The white-tailed deer, adopted in 1997.
State Wildflower:	The dwarf lake iris, adopted in 1998.
State Fossil:	The mastodon, adopted in 2002.
Size of State:	Length: 456 miles; width: 386 miles.
	Area: 59,954 square miles of land; 1,573 square miles of inland lakes; and 38,575 square miles of Great Lakes.
Population as of the 2010 Census:	9,883,640.
Population Ranking:	8th among 50 states.
Inland Lakes in State:	11,037.
Number of Counties:	83.
Number of State Senators:	38.
Number of State Representatives:	110.

Notes

The information in this publication is available, upon request, in an alternative, accessible format.

Cut along the dotted line to create a bookmark.

OCULUS
Eye of the Dome

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For more information regarding the Michigan State Capitol, scan this QR code with your smartphone.